

Health professionals education conference 2021

Reported by Elsie Kiguli-Malwadde and Carol Natukunda

A conference on health professions education was hosted in Kampala, Uganda on 27-28 May with the theme “Transforming Health Professions Education in the 21st Century: From Theory to Practice”. It was a hybrid of face-to-face sessions and virtual attendance from the USA, Kenya, Ethiopia and Rwanda.

The conference was organised by the Eastern Africa Health Professions Educators’ Association (EAHPEA), and the Health Professions Education Partnership Initiative (HEPI), which is co-hosted by the Makerere University College of Health Sciences.

The goal of the HEPI, which started in August 2018, is to improve service delivery of Uganda’s health system through strengthened interdisciplinary health professional education and research training to produce graduates with competencies to address the priority health needs of the population.

HEPI has seen the birth of Health Professions Education and training for Strengthening the Health System and Services in Uganda (HEPI-SHSSU). The project is implemented by a partnership between the African Center for Global Health and Social Transformation (ACHEST), Makerere College of Health Sciences, Busitema University School of Health Sciences, Kabale University School of Medicine, Clarke International University, Mulago School of Nursing and Midwifery, Yale University and John Hopkins University. Prof Sarah Kiguli from the School of Medicine, College of Health Sciences is the project’s Principal Investigator and was Conference’s Chairperson, Organising Committee.

Deputy Vice Chancellor of Makerere University Dr Umar Kakumba officially opened the two-day Conference. In his remarks he noted that health is critical in sustaining and promoting human development and urged all stakeholders to be involved in strengthening education and training systems for Health Professionals. In this regard, he said that EAHPEA and the HEPI Project both provide opportunities and platforms for stakeholders to collaborate, plan and implement strategies that will improve the competence of educators and, ultimately, the quality of graduates and health of communities. He therefore urged the CHS to strengthen its partnership with government, particularly the ministries of health and education, and the development partners and the community to ensure that meaningful transformation is achieved.

The Principal of the CHS, Prof Damalie Nakanjako, also credited the support from the HEPI Program, by noting that the college was able to carry on teaching despite the restrictions to educational institutions aimed

at preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Nelson Sewankambo, a Professor of Internal Medicine in the School of Medicine, delivered the keynote address on “Transformative Health Professions Education: Owning and Changing Our Future”. He highlighted that for transformative education to happen, there is a need to link education and the health systems. He also noted that in order to lay the foundation for transformational learning, the educationists must analyse the opportunities and challenges facing the health workforce and acknowledge the need for change.

The case of STRIPE

ACHEST Director of Medical Education and Development, Dr Kiguli-Malwadde, who is also the Vice President of the African Forum for Research and Education in Health (AFREhealth), made a presentation on “Developing an inter-professional curriculum to improve team-based care in Sub-Saharan Africa: focusing on learners in transition”. She used the example of Strengthening Inter-professional Education for HIV (STRIPE HIV), a programme being implemented by AFREhealth and the University of California San Francisco. The STRIPE HIV programme is about building the capacity of health professionals in the sub-Saharan region using an inter-professional approach. It links health professional’s education to clinical practice (health system) and uses partnerships to create communities of practice. Dr Kiguli-Malwadde said the overarching goal of STRIPE is to strengthen preservice training institutions across Africa to produce the next generation of healthcare workers that can deliver high quality team-based health care. It is delivered through 17 Modules based on HIV content using a case-based format. She stated that the impact has been enormous. There are 40 partner training institutions participating through 100 affiliated clinical sites institutions across 14 countries. This has led to improvements in HIV knowledge, learner confidence, and greater awareness of the need for interprofessional collaboration. She noted that the programme faces administrative and financial challenges, issues to do with sustainability, quality assurance, and how to incorporate the program into curriculum and transform such education programs into practice. Yet, there are positive lessons, namely, that there is great leadership potential in sub-Saharan Africa, there was expansive programmatic capacity and tremendous opportunity around Interprofessional Education and Quality improvement.

For details: <https://news.mak.ac.ug/2021/05/dr-kakumba-officially-opens-hpe-conference-2021>